

Letter to Council

To: Congregation Council
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
2515 Waugh Drive
Houston, TX 77006

From: Charlie Dean

Date: October 11, 2012

I attended the Council Business Meeting of October 7, 2012. On three occasions at the meeting Council and Pastor Lura discussed three sets of facts and the benefits of not being completely up front with the congregation about them. On three occasions I stated that while being less than honest could produce a short-term gain, I thought that honesty was the best option in the long-run. Further, I think honesty is the better option simply because it is honest. It is difficult to imagine a seminary teaching its new preachers that it is **OK to be less than honest with their congregations.**

It is difficult to image a seminary teaching new preachers to engage in cost-benefit analysis of short-term gain and white lies versus long-term gain and complete honesty. Yet, this is what I saw at the business meeting. Council and Pastor Lura appeared quite comfortable doing this. My feeling is that **this is common practice.**

Council derives its power from the Bylaws. Though I have not seen the Bylaws of Grace Lutheran, I am quite sure that the congregation has not granted Council the power to decide whether it may withhold non-exempt information from the congregation and, if so, how much. It is difficult to imagine a seminary teaching its new preachers that **it is OK to encourage Congregational Councils to violate church Bylaws.**

Though I have not seen the Bylaws, I am almost certain that for Council to have the power to hide non-exempt information, the congregation would have to amend its Bylaws. Surely seminaries teach new preachers how to **either (1) be familiar** with their own church Bylaws, **or (2) delegate** this responsibility to someone who has such ability. I believe some delegation is in order.

My suggestion is to make a list of all the potentially bad information, summarize it, make it available the congregation, and let the congregation know that any member has an absolute right to a complete digital copy (or hard copy at the member's option) of the entire October 7 business meeting's information.

The more I think about this, the more it bothers me. I am starting to see why Grace Lutheran has such a financial predicament. **I request this letter be made part of the next Congregation Council business meeting.**